

# Linden Grove Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118586
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326850
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carole Skinner

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	402
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Winch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Keith Simmons
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 February 2001
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Stanhope Road Ashford TN23 5RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 621133
<b>Fax number</b>	01233 634828

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area of significant deprivation where the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. Just under a third of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is also well above average. Twenty-two of these pupils receive specialist provision in the school's speech and language unit. The proportion of pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language has shown a marked rise in the past three years and is slightly higher than in most schools. The school was removed from special measures in November 2007 and given a notice to improve. The headteacher was appointed in January 2008. There has been a high turnover of staff, including senior leaders, during the past 12 months. The school also has high levels of mobility amongst its pupils. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Nursery and Reception classes, although around half of the children who join the Reception classes have not attended a nursery.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It is providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils and is now improving rapidly under the leadership of a determined headteacher who is passionate about giving pupils the best possible start in life. Despite recent staff changes, he has successfully increased the momentum of school improvement by creating a strong leadership team and capitalising on their considerable expertise to drive developments in key areas. The staff team has embraced the headteacher's high aspirations for the school. Well targeted support from the local authority has contributed to building good capacity for continuing improvement.

The impact of this has been to increase the proportion of good teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. This, in turn, is helping to accelerate pupils' progress. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their very low starting points. Records show year-on-year improvements in the rates of progress pupils are making. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start because of the high quality provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is now continuing through into Year 1 as a result of closer liaison between teachers and greater awareness of the pupils' needs. Pupils with complex speech and communication difficulties make good progress due to the high quality provision in the speech and language unit. Although standards in Year 6 remain below average, there is a clear trend of improvement. There is still a long way to go before every pupil is making consistently good progress throughout the school, but teachers are gradually eradicating the legacy of underachievement that was caused by weak teaching in the past. The introduction of more frequent and rigorous checks on pupils' progress by both teachers and senior leaders ensures that early signs of underachievement are dealt with promptly. These new systems are still being developed and do not yet give a reliable picture of each pupil's achievement in the longer term. Nevertheless, they incorporate challenging targets for every pupil to achieve during the course of a year.

Within an overall picture of satisfactory teaching and learning, there is a growing proportion of good practice. In the best lessons, teachers engage pupils fully in active learning and tailor the work carefully to meet pupils' particular needs. They are able to do this because they keep track of how well pupils have understood each stage of learning. This good practice is becoming more widespread but is not yet consistent in all classes and all areas of the curriculum. In some cases, the curriculum itself contributes to the less successful teaching because some of the topics do not inspire and motivate pupils sufficiently. On the other hand, some lessons are successful because of the way teachers link subjects together to make them more meaningful for pupils.

Senior leaders have recognised the need to boost pupils' self-esteem and well-being in order to improve their ability to learn. Pupils' lack of confidence sometimes makes them overly dependent on teachers and hinders the development of independent learning skills. High levels of care for pupils' welfare and safety help them to feel secure and happy and to enjoy their time in school. Good strategies for managing disruptive behaviour ensure a calm and industrious working atmosphere in classrooms and good behaviour around the school.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because they have a wealth of exciting opportunities, both in the well equipped classrooms and the imaginatively planned outside areas, to learn through play. Despite this good provision, standards remain below national averages by the time children enter Year 1, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, where they make slower progress than in other areas of learning. New strategies for teaching letters and sounds are already beginning to accelerate children's progress in learning to read and write. This means they are now better equipped when they move into Year 1. A strong focus on developing speaking, listening and social skills is evident in all activities as adults constantly talk to and question children about what they have learned. Children have good opportunities to make choices and select activities. Adults help children to grow in confidence and to develop independence by encouraging them to do things for themselves. Keen attention to children's safety and welfare helps them to settle quickly and to feel happy and safe at school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Share existing good practice to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in lessons and develop greater confidence and independence in learning.
- Refine assessment and tracking systems to provide greater reliability in measuring pupils' achievements and their progress towards challenging targets.
- Develop more creative approaches to planning the curriculum to make it more exciting and relevant to pupils' interests and experiences.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The school is on course to meet the minimum levels expected in English and mathematics for the first time in more than five years. Progress is accelerating. This begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage where good learning is now starting to be transferred into Year 1. Pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in Year 2, but the high proportion of pupils with additional learning needs keeps standards pegged at below average levels. Progress is steadily improving at Key Stage 2 but it is harder for the older pupils to catch up to where they should be by Year 6, especially those who move from school to school. Actions taken by the school have had a good impact on standards in reading and this is now filtering through to writing. Improvements in mathematics teaching are having a slower impact as many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding due to weak teaching in the past.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Improving pupils' well-being and their engagement in learning are at the heart of the school's future planning. Many pupils lack confidence in their own abilities and rely heavily on staff to direct and support them. They respond well to encouragement and are keen to please their teachers but do not always take the initiative to do things for themselves. They are beginning

to play a more active role in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils get on well with one another and enjoy opportunities to work together. Good relationships and approachable staff give pupils a sense of security and a sound awareness of right and wrong. Most pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and feel safe. Good behaviour in lessons ensures that learning is not disrupted. Pupils are developing a good understanding of how to keep healthy but do not always put the principles into practice, for instance when choosing snacks. Nevertheless, they enjoy participating in sports clubs and other opportunities for physical activity. Pupils are gradually improving their literacy, numeracy and computer skills and this helps to prepare them appropriately for the next stage of their education. Despite the school's best efforts, poor attendance by a small number of persistent absentees limits the progress they make.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has now successfully eradicated inadequate teaching and there is a steadily growing proportion of good lessons. The focus is now firmly on how to promote learning through independent thinking and practical activities that engage and motivate pupils. As a result, teachers spend less time talking while pupils sit passively. There are still occasions when pupils are inactive for too long and this slows the pace of learning. Teachers have improved classroom displays so that pupils can use them as prompts to help them. As a result, they are gradually becoming less reliant on teachers. Importantly, teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and a clearer picture of their previous attainment. This enables them to plan tasks that match pupils' differing levels of attainment. Some teachers' marking is of high quality and shows pupils clearly how they could do better next time but this is not yet consistent in every class.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is in the process of being adapted and modified so that it better matches pupils' needs and interests. The school is moving away from a subject-based approach to planning the curriculum around themes that appeal to both boys and girls. It is still at an early stage of development. There are instances where creative planning makes meaningful links between different subjects, but this is not consistent. Nevertheless, there are some notable strengths and positive innovations. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum provides exciting experiences for young children and is now being extended into Year 1 to ease pupils into the National Curriculum at their own pace. All pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have been equipped with a laptop to extend their skills and enable them to learn at home. Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of personal, social and health education and a wide range of clubs. The Year 6 residential visit gives pupils opportunities to develop confidence and self-reliance. Events such as the 'cultural fortnight' help to expand pupils' horizons and their awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

All adults provide high levels of care and support for the pupils' welfare. The school works very closely with external agencies to promote regular attendance and to ensure that the school

meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is also developing better partnerships with pupils' families to support learning at home. There are robust procedures for keeping pupils safe and for tackling issues such as bullying and racial abuse, which pupils say are rare. By improving the quality of school meals and providing a breakfast club, the school has made a difference to many pupils' readiness for learning, especially after lunch. Academic guidance is steadily improving but recent initiatives have not yet become fully embedded in everyday practice. For example, some pupils know and use their learning targets, while others are unclear about them. New systems for tracking pupils' progress from term to term are proving invaluable in promoting faster progress. These do not yet show clearly enough whether individual pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets for the end of each year and key stage.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior and middle managers have readily taken on the challenge of tackling the root causes of underachievement. Senior leaders meet with teachers each term to review each pupil's progress and discuss the way forward. Subject leaders in English and mathematics are driving improvements by sharing good practice, for example through team teaching and coaching. Frequent lesson observations and careful scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work highlight key areas for improvement which inform strategic planning. The new inclusion manager is reviewing the provision for pupils with additional needs to ensure that those in mainstream classes receive the same high quality provision as pupils in the speech and language unit. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured continuing high standards of provision. Many of the governors are new and not yet fully involved in strategic management. They are involved productively in monitoring the impact of the school's actions through liaison with senior managers and subject leaders. Closer links with parents ensure that the majority see the school in a positive light. The school is working towards playing a central role in the local community but has yet to firm up plans for promoting community cohesion in terms of national and global issues.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linden Grove Primary School, Ashford, TN23 5RN

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and feel safe. You like your teachers and say they help you if you get stuck. We were very pleased to see how well you behave in lessons and around the school. You were always there to open doors for us without being asked to!

- Your school has made a lot of improvements over the last year. It is now a satisfactory school and you are making satisfactory progress. The teachers are making lessons more interesting and exciting for you, but sometimes you still have to sit and listen for too long. Also, some of you lack confidence and ask your teachers to help you too often when you should be working things out for yourselves. You told us how much you enjoy the clubs and sports activities that the school provides. These are helping you to keep fit and the new school dinners make sure you eat healthy food. Do you think you could eat more healthy snacks like fruit instead of chocolate and crisps

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The people who run the school are doing a good job in introducing new ways of doing things that help you to learn better. You are making faster progress now than you were last year and you are reaching higher standards. But, with more improvements, you could do even better. Many of you are making good progress in lessons, but this doesn't happen all the time.

We have asked the headteacher and governors to do three things to help Linden Grove become a good school:

- Help you to become more confident and to work independently so that you make good progress in every lesson.
- Make sure that your teachers know exactly what your targets are and how close you are to achieving them every term so that they can help you make faster progress if you need to.
- Plan more exciting and interesting ways of learning about different subjects so that you can understand how they link up together.

You can help by remembering your targets and using them in your lessons. You can also try to use the 'learning walls' in your classrooms to help you in your work before you ask the teacher to tell you what to do.

With best wishes for your success in the future Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector